

**ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**  
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL GROWTH  
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**Memorandum**

**To: ENRP Co-Chairs Sean O'Connor & Barry Weinstein, MD**

**From: Tourism & Culture Chair Robert Blanchard**

**Re: June & July 2003 meetings**

**Date: July 25, 2003**

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The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership's Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met June 17 at the Buffalo Niagara CVB, and July 15, 2003 at the Niagara Falls Comfort Inn. Present for the June meeting were subcommittee members Blanchard and Geiger (proxy), as well as ENRP Ad Hoc member Timothy Doolittle. Present for the July meeting were subcommittee members Blanchard, O'Connor, and Casale.

Tourist Signage

Last year the subcommittee completed an inventory of desired tourist directional signs on our region's thruways and expressways. That list was compiled with the input of the ENRP and municipalities throughout the two counties. The intent was to convince NYSDOT and the Thruway Authority to place these signs, after which we would move on to placing directional signs in municipalities to connect people from the thruway exit to the attraction. The state responded that they want to see municipal signs up first.

This year, ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk was asked to serve as project manager for a cultural tourism directional sign project for the City of Buffalo, which tied in to One Summer Long Sensation. While this project was put together on very short notice, it is coming together well, and in fact will serve as a pilot for a comprehensive sign program to follow. By the end of July installation will have begun on the 85 signs included in the pilot project.

The comprehensive project will have three components – thruway and highway directional signage, municipal directional signage, and descriptive signs at the attractions themselves. It is understood that a comprehensive project such as this will be a multi-year effort.

At the June 6 general meeting approval was granted to offer the ENRP's services to the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative to act as the

implementer of a comprehensive attraction sign program for Erie and Niagara Counties.

The Subcommittee feels that the immediate next steps will be to analyze the pilot, inventory existing signage in the two counties, research best practices, determine what kinds of attractions in addition to the cultural should be included, and determine a budget, timeline, and funding sources.

To assist the Subcommittee in these efforts interns from UB and NU will be secured for the fall semester, and we are looking to involve interested and knowledgeable individuals in the effort. To that end, please forward recommendations to the Subcommittee Chair or ENRP Administrator.

#### Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative

Following last year's issuance of the report, "Cultural Tourism in The Buffalo-Niagara Region: Developing A Comprehensive Plan Phase 1: Inventory of Cultural Tourism Planning Initiatives, Recommendations for Pursuing a Comprehensive Plan," the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, through funding from the John R. Oishei Foundation and Erie County, has begun the next phase of the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative.

Work is being done by three subcommittees – capacity building, marketing, and implementation. Subcommittee Chair Blanchard is also chairing the Initiative's implementation subcommittee; ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk is acting as the group's representative, and several ENRP members are present to represent their various organizations. The project has moved into a prioritization phase, and is on track to have a set of recommendations – in the form of a comprehensive plan for cultural tourism – ready by the end of the year for implementation in 2004. The aforementioned tourist signage project will be one of those recommendations.

#### Other Issues

Other issues discussed included the Seneca Nation's desire to use the Buffalo Convention Center for their next casino (the Subcommittee was going to request that the ENRP stress that we need to have a continued presence of a convention center in this region, but the issue has been settled), and the Motorcoach Association's difficulty with NYSDOT (also since settled).